

has been responsible, in part, for the explosive growth of young girls in the juvenile justice system. The use of the VCO exception has been phased out in about half of the states, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, who once advocated for its inclusion, have strongly lobbied for its removal.

Both bipartisan versions of this legislation previously passed by the full House would have required states to phase-out use of the VCO by September 30, 2020, with an allowance for states to apply for a hardship extension through OJJDP. Due to the objection of just one Senator, this provision could not receive unanimous consent in the Senate. Rather than stopping the other improvements in the bill from becoming law, this VCO phase-out was removed H.R. 6964. H.R. 6964, however, will provide additional safeguards for status offenders in locked facilities, including limits on how long status offenders may be detained. I urge Congress to eliminate the VCO exception once and for all in subsequent legislation.

JJDP is more than just a floor of federal protection—it also requires states to develop coordinated plans to serve juvenile offenders and prevent children from ever becoming involved in delinquent activity. H.R. 6964 requires, for the first time, state juvenile justice plans to consider the latest scientific research on adolescent development and behavior, recognizing the importance of prevention and early intervention in juvenile crime policy. Congress should not have to mandate consideration of evidence and research, but slogans and soundbites have unfortunately dictated our nation's approach to crime policy—even juvenile crime. These slogans and soundbites often do nothing to decrease crime. In fact, when studied, many have been shown to actually increase crime.

H.R. 6964 also encourages states to consider promising practices: Programming to ensure youth access to public defenders with juvenile court experience; the use of 'problem-solving courts' as an alternative to probation and confinement; efforts to inform and aid juveniles in the process of sealing and expunging their juvenile record; and programming to address the needs of girls in or at risk of entering the system when developing state plans.

And finally, the bill retools and retitles Title V of JJDP, the Local Delinquency Prevention Grant program, as the Youth Promise Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Program. Title V will now support communities in the planning and implementation of evidence-based prevention and intervention programs specifically designed to reduce juvenile and delinquency and gang involvement. Grant recipients would be required to analyze the unmet delinquency prevention needs of youth in the community, then develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to address those unmet needs with an emphasis on program coordination.

Research shows that a community-wide, coordinated approach to delinquency prevention that utilizes a continuum of services can actually save the community money and improve efficiencies. I'd like to especially thank my colleagues for working with me on the Title V provisions, which are modeled after a bill I've been working on for nearly ten years—The Youth P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Act. I am confident that,

if implemented correctly, this incentive grant program will vastly improve the lives of—and long-term economic opportunity for—at-risk youth across the country. I look forward to working with OJJDP as it implements this new title.

H.R. 6964 also includes a two-year reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). RHYA was originally passed as part of JJDP because this Congress recognized the importance of alternatives to detention for youth who were not delinquent but had run away from home or foster care.

While originally passed as a part of JJDP in 1974, RHYA and JJDP have always been administered separately, and they have been reauthorized separately since 1988. Like JJDP, RHYA is long overdue for reauthorization, as it was last reauthorized in 2008. This temporary reauthorization of RHYA demonstrates our commitment to its programs, particularly considering last year's groundbreaking research showing that homelessness was experienced by at least 700,000 unaccompanied minors age 14 to 17 and 3.2 million young adults age 18 to 24 in any given year.

I want to note that this two-year reauthorization does not serve as a substitute for a full examination of evidence-based best practices for service-delivery impacting runaway and homeless youth. We still need to pass a comprehensive RHYA reauthorization that makes needed programmatic updates and ensures authorization for appropriate funding levels.

I look forward to working with the Gentlewoman from North Carolina, Dr. Foxx and my colleagues in this chamber who have long advocated for a full reauthorization of RHYA, as well as advocates for runaway and homeless youth providers, to move a full reauthorization of RHYA in the next Congress.

Prevention efforts, especially those targeted at our nation's youth, are our most effective way of reducing crime over time. We can choose to be as strict or as lenient as we want on adult criminal offenders, but if we are not focusing our efforts on changing the trajectory of delinquent youth, we have little chance of reducing crime in the future. It is my sincere hope that H.R. 6964 will help to change the trajectory of many young people and get them on the track to succeeding in school and life, which will strengthen communities across the country.

In closing, I'd like to thank Chairwoman Foxx and Representative Lewis of Minnesota and their staffs for their steadfast work over multiple Congresses to successfully advance JJDP reauthorization through both chambers and to the President's desk. I'd also like to thank my hardworking committee and personal office staff past and present, specifically Christian Haines, Bobby Vassar, Erin Davies, Rashage Green, Carol Chodroff, Evan Chapman, David Dailey, Veronique Pluviose, Ilana Bruner, and Jacque Chevalier Mosely for their tireless work on both the Youth P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Act and comprehensive JJDP reauthorization.

HONORING MS. PATRICIA W. McDOWELL

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 17, 2018

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ms. Patricia W. McDowell on the occasion of her retirement from USDA Rural Development following 30 years of exemplary service to the State of Mississippi and to the Nation.

Raised in Jackson, Mississippi, Patricia graduated from Wingfield High School in 1974 and then attended Jackson State University. She began her career with the Farmer's Home Administration in 1988, following employment with the American Red Cross in service to military families. Patricia's initial duties with USDA began in the Single Family Housing Program as a Loan Clerk. She was then promoted to the position of Community & Business Programs Technician, and later she was promoted to the position of Loan Specialist within the Community Programs Division. In February 2017, Patricia was promoted to Community Programs Director where she has ably led the Division and will retire on December 31, 2018.

In her role as Community Programs Director for USDA Rural Development in the State of Mississippi Patricia has provided communities throughout the state with access to the services they need to grow and thrive. She has ensured that Mississippi's rural citizens have access to basic necessities such as: safe water, electrical utilities, and healthcare services. She has worked diligently to utilize the resources under her authority to promote educational opportunities, support law enforcement and emergency responders, and promote access to childcare and other critical community facilities. In every aspect of her work, she has performed professionally and with great enthusiasm, and she is a shining example for those who will follow in her footsteps.

Mr. Speaker, too often we overlook the many contributions made by the career civil servants of the U.S. Government who work so diligently and professionally in service to their country and community. Patricia has made a career of serving others, and her work has had a direct and positive influence on the lives of literally tens of thousands of Mississippians. It is my honor to represent Ms. Patricia W. McDowell in Congress, and a privilege to offer her the genuine gratitude of this chamber in support of three exemplary decades of civil service. I congratulate Patricia for her years of service and the innumerable contributions she has made to improve the quality of life of rural Mississippians. I know her service to others is not over, and I wish her the best as she moves on to the next chapter of her life.

HONORING ALEX STIRN AND TYLER WALTERMAN

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 17, 2018

Mr. MESSER, Mr. Speaker, I rise today, on behalf of the entire 6th Congressional District